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SUBJECT: ROUND THREE OF PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS - MORE  
VIOLENCE, PESSIMISM, AND DEBATE: EGYPTIAN  
MEDIA THEMES, DECEMBER 5-11.

**1.** Summary: The third and final round of voting for the Parliamentary elections occurred on Dec. 7, amidst violence and closure of numerous polling stations. According to election monitors and news reports, journalists and television crews in some flashpoint locations were turned away from polling stations, with reports of one Al-Jazeera crew assaulted near a polling station in Upper Egypt. As in previous weeks, the press focused on the vocal complaints of judges as the elections period passed. As the dust settled, news analysis and editorials debated successes and failures and the prospect for reform in the new Parliament. State Department Deputy Spokesman Adam Ereli's comments on the elections received front page attention in the days after the elections.

**2.** Overview of Election Results and Polling: On Dec. 8, all papers carried similar news stories of violence and polling station closings. News sections provided the Election Commissions announcement that 12 seats (out of 444) remained undecided due to court rulings canceling the elections in several municipalities. Egyptian Television provided extensive footage of elections, including violence in several locations. The two leading pro-government dailies (Al-Ahram, circ. 750,000) and (Al-Akhbar, circ. 800,000) carried news stories describing the day as the most violent of all election days and enumerating individual deaths and injuries. Al-Ahram, on Dec. 10, quoted State Department Deputy Spokesman Ereli in a front page story saying that the recent elections gave a chance for the opposition and for independents to achieve historic progress, that the U.S. is concerned over the violence, that we are handling this issue and will continue to do so with the Egyptian Government at the highest levels." It went on to quote Ereli as saying that the Muslim Brothers were elected as independents and there is no recommendation... to prevent us from dealing with them in that capacity.

**3.** NDP's "defeat"; pessimism about reform prospects and the lack of a real opposition: Despite retaining a large majority of seats in the Parliament, the theme of several television talk shows and opinion columns was that the NDP failed in the elections, due to its perceived hand in the election violence, its inability to obtain wide public support, and its inability to prevent strong opposition parties from running. Questions also arose over the prospects for reform. On Dec. 5, columnist Magdy Mehanna from the independent daily Al-Masry Al-Yom (circ. 25,000) criticized the NDP supreme committee for including independent candidates in the NDP and, thereby, "deceiving the public about its victory." On Dec. 6, Al-Ahram's independent columnist, Salama Ahmad Salama blamed the NDP for "resisting change and reform." Al-Ahram's liberal columnist, Abdallah Abdel Salam wrote that the elections resulted in a victory for the Old Guard who are unfortunately controlling and shaping political reform. Similarly, opposition daily Al-Wafd also struck out against the Old Guard as the reason for the setback for democracy and reform. Al-Ahram's columnist, Dr. Mohammed El-Sayed Saied said many of the well-known candidates failed to retain their seats because they "spoke a language that those who went to vote did not understand, while those who understood did not vote." A similar view was expressed on December 5 on the live current issues talk show, "Bebasata" on Al-Mehwar TV (private Egyptian TV satellite channel) when Al-Ahram writer, Abdel Azim Darwish accused the opposition of failing and for "obviously having no existence among the masses." Al-Akhbar's unsigned editorial on Dec. 7 hewed more to the official line: "the current parliamentary elections are the most transparent and honest elections in Egypt over the past 50 years" and "full democracy cannot be achieved overnight."

**4.** Role of Judges: Many papers continued to highlight the protests of individual judges, and of the Judges Association, over the ambiguous status forced upon them during their monitoring of the elections. In the days before the elections, the pan-Arab newspaper, Al-Sharq Al-Awsat quoted judges saying that "the physical assaults on them were a political decision" and calling for "removing the Ministers of Interior and Justice" if judges are assaulted again or if "voters are prevented from voting."

On Dec. 8, all papers reported that 40 judges "withdrew from the elections in objection to the violence and lack of security" and, moreover, printed the Judges Association's official report that security forces had shot voters and citizens.

15. Ayman Nour case: On Dec. 6, all papers reported the resumption of the trial of Al-Ghad party Chairman, Ayman Nour, charged with forging signatures to establish his party, and the subsequent decision to continue his detention pending completion of the trial. On Dec. 11, Al-Masry Al-Yom reported that Nour's trial was postponed until Dec. 12 for the arguments of the defense.

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